

Threatened and Endangered Species in Forests of Wisconsin

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PINE-DROPS

(*Pterospora andromedea*)

Federal Status: Not Listed

State Status: Endangered

Description: Pine-drops has a sturdy, hairy, fleshy-pink stem which grows up to 3 feet tall. From June to August, nodding, bowl-shaped, white to reddish flowers droop from the upper half of the stem. The flowers mature into fruiting capsules, each of which can produce 4,800 minute, winged, wind-spread seeds. This means a single plant can produce as many as 600,000 seeds! The lower part of the stem bears numerous short, tan to pink scales. This plant has no green leaves.

Habitat: Usually this plant is found in humus-rich forests under white pine trees in eastern Wisconsin. In parts of its range, pine-drops can be found in hardwood forests. It



does not produce any chlorophyll, relying instead on dead organic matter for food.

Underground, it has a massive snarl of branching roots which, in partnership with various soil fungi, absorb nutrients from decaying plant and animal matter.



Forestry Considerations: It is important to maintain the shaded character of the mixed woods where pine-drops live, along with the humus-rich, loose soil found there. Therefore, single-tree selection silviculture is advisable, along with the use of equipment that does not compact the soil. Spring and summer harvest of trees will disturb or crush growing, flowering and fruiting plants. Winter harvest, when the soil is solidly frozen and the plant is dormant, is best.

